Audit of Timber Harvesting and Road Construction, Maintenance and Deactivation

West Fraser Mills Ltd.

Forest Licence A16827

FPB/ARC/38

March 2001

101-04079/

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Report from the Board

A. Report from the Board

This is the Board's report on a compliance audit of Forest Licence A16827, held by West Fraser Mills Ltd. (West Fraser). Operations on Forest Licence A16827 are carried out by both Houston Forest Products Company and West Fraser Mills Ltd. The operating area for this licence is located in the Morice Forest District, primarily north and south of the town of Houston (see attached map).

The Report from the Auditor (Part C) provides further details on the location of FL A16827, the scope of the audit and the audit findings. The Report from the Auditor is based on the audit procedures described in Part B[1].

The audit examined West Fraser's planning, field activities and obligations related to timber harvesting and the construction, maintenance and deactivation of roads for the period of August 1, 1999 to August 15, 2000.

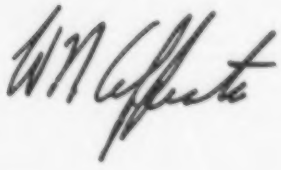
The Board considered the Report from the Auditor along with supporting audit evidence and affirms the auditor's findings and conclusions.

Conclusions

West Fraser's timber harvesting and road practices complied with Forest Practices Code requirements in all significant respects.

Instances of non-compliance were relatively few in number and minor in nature; therefore they were not considered worthy of reporting.

The Board notes that the auditee has systematically approached the management of biodiversity in their forest development plan in agreement with the *Biodiversity Guidebook*.



W.N. (Bill) Cafferata
Chair, Forest Practices Board

March 14, 2001

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[1] Part B of this document provides background information on the Board's audit program and the process followed by the Board in preparing its report.

Forest Practices Board Compliance Audit Process

B. Forest Practices Board Compliance Audit Process

Background

The Forest Practices Board conducts audits of government's and agreement holder's compliance with the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act* and regulations (the Code). The Board is given the authority to conduct these periodic independent audits by section 176 of the Act. Compliance audits examine forest planning and practices to determine whether or not they meet Code requirements.

The Board undertakes both "limited scope" and "full scope" compliance audits. A limited scope audit involves the examination of selected forest practices (e.g., roads, or timber harvesting, or silviculture) and the related operational planning activities. A full scope audit examines all operational planning activities and forest practices.

The Board determines how many audits it will conduct in a year, and what type of audits (limited or full scope), based on budget and other considerations. The Board audits agreement holders who have forest licences or other tenures under the *Forest Act* or the *Range Act*. The Board also audits government's Small Business Forest Enterprise Program (SBFEP) which is administered by Ministry of Forests district offices. Selection of agreement holders and district SBFEPs for audit is done randomly, using a computer program, to ensure a fair, unbiased selection of auditees.

Audit Standards

Audits by the Forest Practices Board are conducted in accordance with the auditing standards developed by the Board. These standards are consistent with generally accepted auditing standards.

The audits determine compliance with the Code based on criteria derived from the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act* and its related regulations. Audit criteria are established for the evaluation or measurement of each practice required by the Code. The criteria reflect judgments about the level of performance that constitutes compliance with each requirement.

The standards and procedures for compliance audits are described in the Board's *Compliance Audit Reference Manual*.

Audit Process

Conducting the Audit

Once the Board selects an audit and decides on the scope of the audit (limited scope or full scope), the staff and resources required to conduct the audit and the period covered by the audit are determined. Board staff also meet with the party being audited to discuss the logistics of the audit before commencing the work.

All the activities carried out during the period subject to audit are identified; for example, harvesting or replanting sites and building or deactivating road sections during the audit period. The items that make up each forest activity are referred to as a "population." For example, all sites harvested form the "timber harvesting population." All road sections constructed form the "road construction population." The populations are then sub-divided based on factors such as the characteristics of the sites and the potential severity of the consequences of non-compliance on the sites.

The most efficient means of obtaining information to conclude whether there is compliance with the Code is chosen for each population. Because of limited resources, sampling is usually relied upon to obtain audit evidence, rather than inspecting all activities.

Individual sites and forest practices within each population have different characteristics, such as the type of terrain or type of yarding. Each population is divided into distinct sub-populations on the basis of common characteristics (e.g., steep ground vs. flat ground). A separate sample is selected for each population (e.g., the cutblocks selected for auditing timber harvesting). Within each population, more audit effort (i.e., more audit sampling) is allocated to the sub-population where the risk of non-compliance is greater.

Audit work in the field includes assessments from helicopters and intensive ground procedures such as the measurement of specific features like road width. The audit teams generally spend two to three weeks in the field.

Evaluating the Results

The Board recognizes that compliance with the many requirements of the Code is more a matter of degree than absolute adherence. Determining compliance requires the exercise of professional judgment within the direction provided by the Board.

Auditors collect, analyze, interpret and document information to support the audit results. The audit team, composed of professionals and technical experts, first determines whether forest practices are in compliance with Code requirements. For those practices considered to not be in compliance, the audit team then evaluates the degree to which the practices are judged not in compliance. The significance of the non-compliance is determined based on a number of criteria including the magnitude of the event, the frequency of its occurrence, and the severity of the consequences.

As part of the assessment process, auditors categorize their findings into the following levels of compliance:

Compliance – where the auditor finds that practices meet Code requirements.

Not significant non-compliance – where the auditor, upon reaching a non-compliance conclusion, determines that a non-compliance event, or the accumulation and consequences of a number of non-compliance events, is not significant and is not considered worthy of reporting.

Significant non-compliance – where the auditor determines that the event or condition, or the accumulation and consequences of a number of non-compliance events or conditions, is significant and is considered worthy of reporting.

Significant breach – where the auditor finds that significant harm has occurred or is beginning to occur to persons or the environment as a result of the non-compliance. A significant breach can also result from the cumulative effect of a number of non-compliance events or conditions.

Identification of a possible significant breach requires the auditor to conduct tests to confirm whether or not there has been a breach. If it is determined that a significant breach has occurred, the auditor is required by the *Forest Practices Board Regulation* to immediately advise the Board, the party being audited, and the Ministers of Forests, Energy & Mines, and Environment, Lands & Parks.

Reporting

Based on the above evaluation, the auditor then prepares the "Report from the Auditor" for submission to the Board. The party being audited is given a draft of the report before it is submitted to the Board so that the party is fully aware of the findings. The party is also kept fully informed of the audit findings throughout the process, and is given opportunities to provide additional relevant information and to ensure the auditor has complete and correct information.

Once the auditor submits the report, the Board reviews it and determines whether any party or person is potentially adversely affected by the audit findings. If so, the party or person must be given an opportunity to make representations before the Board decides the matter and issues a final report to the public and government. The representations allow potentially adversely affected parties to present their views to the Board.

At the discretion of the Board, representations may be written or oral. The Board will generally offer written representations to potentially adversely affected parties, unless the circumstances strongly support the need for an oral hearing.

The Board then reviews both the report from the auditor and the representations before preparing its final report, which includes the Board's conclusions and, if appropriate, recommendations.

If the Board's conclusions or recommendations result in newly adversely affected parties or persons, additional representations would be required.

Once the representations have been completed, the report is finalized and released: first to the auditee and then to the public and government.

Report from the Auditor

C. Report from the Auditor

1.0 Introduction

As part of the Forest Practices Board's 2000 compliance audit program, Forest Licence A16827 was selected for audit from the population of major forest licences within the Prince Rupert Forest Region. The forest licence, held by West Fraser Mills Ltd., was selected randomly and not on the basis of location or level of performance.

The operating area of the forest licence is located entirely within the north and south areas of the Morice Forest District (see attached map).

The forest licence has an allowable annual cut of 713,896 cubic metres. The forest development plan submitted by Houston Forest Products Company is a joint plan, with Houston Forest Products Company managing 649,800 cubic metres of the licence and Fraser Lake Sawmills Ltd. (Division of West Fraser) managing 64,096 cubic metres. Houston Forest Products is a joint venture between Weldwood of Canada Limited and West Fraser. Weldwood of Canada Limited holds the management contract and is responsible for the management of Houston Forest Products.

2.0 Audit Scope

The audit examined the planning and field activities related to timber harvesting and construction, maintenance and deactivation of roads for the period August 1, 1999, to August 15, 2000. This involved examining operational plans, such as forest development plans[i] and silviculture prescriptions,[ii] that supported the activities examined during the audit period.

These activities were assessed for compliance with the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act* and related regulations (the Code).

The activities carried out during the audit period, and therefore subject to audit, were:

- harvesting of 60 cutblocks, of which 46 had silviculture prescriptions approved during the audit period
- harvesting of 378 areas of less than 1 hectare to control or salvage trees affected by mountain pine beetle
- construction of 102 road sections totalling 130 kilometres
- maintenance and seasonal deactivation of approximately 736 kilometres of road, involving activities such as road surfacing and the cleaning of culverts and ditches
- construction of 22 bridges and maintenance of 84 bridges
- permanent deactivation of 33 road sections totalling 62 kilometres

Section 3 describes the audit of these activities and the results. The Board's *Compliance Audit Reference Manual, Version 4.1, May 2000*, sets out the standards and procedures that were used to carry out this audit.

3.0 Audit Findings

Planning and practices examined

The audit work on selected roads and cutblocks included ground-based procedures and assessments from the air using helicopters. The audit examined the following activities:

- harvesting of 25 cutblocks during the audit period and harvesting of 43 areas of less than 1 hectare exempted from silviculture prescriptions
- silviculture prescriptions for 23 cutblocks where harvesting activity had not commenced but the silviculture prescriptions were approved during the audit period
- construction of 41 road sections totalling 64 kilometres of road
- maintenance and seasonal deactivation of approximately 292 kilometres of road
- construction of 14 bridges and maintenance of 28 bridges
- permanent deactivation of 33 road sections totalling 62 kilometres

Findings

The audit found that Houston Forest Products and West Fraser complied, in all significant respects, with the timber harvesting and road construction, maintenance, and deactivation requirements of the Code.

4.0 Audit Opinion

In my opinion, the timber harvesting and road construction, maintenance, and deactivation activities carried out by Houston Forest Products and West Fraser, on Forest Licence A16827, from Aug. 1, 1999 to Aug. 15, 2000 were in compliance, in all significant respects, with the requirements of the Code as of August 2000. Houston Forest Products Company is a joint venture between Weldwood of Canada Limited and West Fraser Mills Ltd.

In reference to compliance, the term "in all significant respects" recognizes that there may be minor instances of non-compliance that either may not be detected by the audit, or that are detected but not considered worthy of inclusion in the audit report.

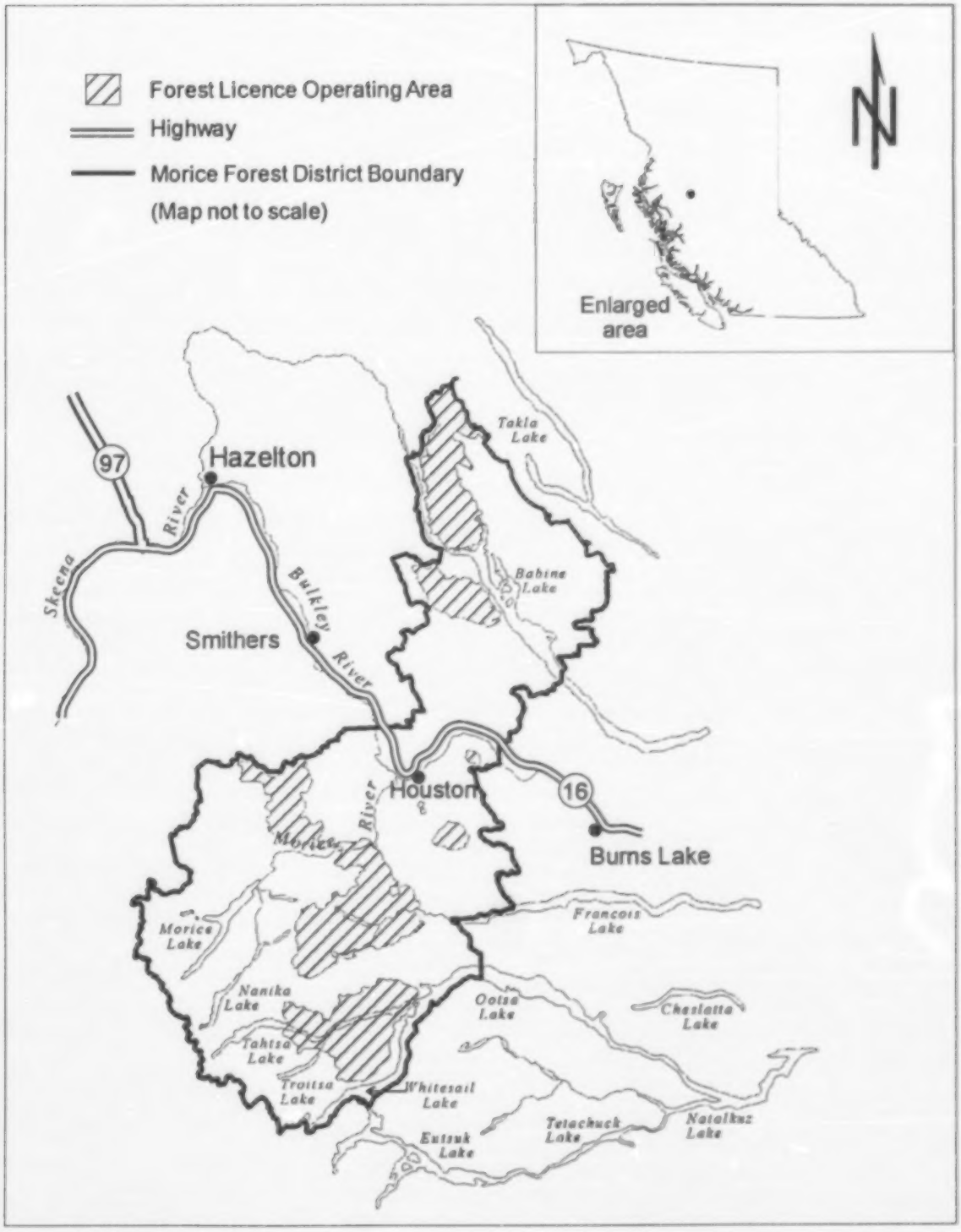
Sections 2 and 3 of this report from the auditor describe the basis of the audit work performed in reaching this opinion. The audit was conducted in accordance with the auditing standards of

the Forest Practices Board. Such an audit includes examining sufficient road and timber harvesting practices to support an overall evaluation of compliance with the Code.

Sucha More, CA
Auditor of Record
Victoria, British Columbia

February 22, 2001

Audit of West Fraser Mills Ltd.
Forest Licence A16827



* A forest development plan is an operational plan that provides the public and government agencies with information about the location and scheduling of proposed roads and cutblocks for harvesting timber over a period of at least five years. The plan must specify measures that will be carried out to protect forest resources (including water, fisheries, and other forest resources). It must also illustrate and describe how objectives and strategies established in higher level plans, where they have been prepared, will be carried out. Site specific plans are required to be consistent with the forest development plan.

* A silviculture prescription is a site-specific operational plan that describes the forest management objectives for an area to be harvested (a cutblock). The silviculture prescriptions examined in the audit are required to describe the management activities proposed to maintain the inherent productivity of the site, accommodate all resource values including biological diversity, and produce a free growing stand capable of meeting stated management objectives. Silviculture prescriptions must be consistent with forest development plans that encompass the area to which the prescription applies.